Proposed plan to address the new city council re: health benefits for domestic partners

Important dates: April 15 – new council and mayors sworn in; April 22 – first council meeting with new members; September (?) 2003 – beginning of 2004 budget process. April 2005 – district elections for council.

Objective: Build support for keeping the partner benefits in the budget

Message: It will be important to shape the debate in the community: "It's about fairness, it's about good business". While we may not ultimately win a vote to retain the benefits, we must win the publicity battle and make sure that no one is able to hide their opposition behind "economic excuses". Exposing council members' prejudice would be a step in the right direction and lay some groundwork for future elections.

Major philosophical question to be answered: Would the group be willing to support a third option that would be inclusive of same-sex partner benefits but might not use that language? E.g. employee and dependents + one policy. We don't even know if this is possible, but we should decide on where our group stands on such "compromise" plans and explore options that bring the widest support.

Strategy/Timeline/Goals:

Informational meetings with newly elected members to discuss their reasons for opposing benefits and the timeline they think the issue will travel.

Timeline: completed by April 18.

The meetings should be a listening opportunity for us. We'll have a chance to hear their arguments of opposition. We will weigh-in with our support, but the main goal is to listen so we can craft a stronger message to lobby them with. Who knows, we might find some windows of opportunity for conversion as we listen. We'll also need to know if this will be the first item on the April 22 agenda, or if they plan to address this in the 2004 budget process. The answer to that question is crucial – as it will affect our timetable.

Identify and engage local business leaders that support the benefits to sign an open letter to the mayor and council.

Timeline: depends on council's timeline to address issue, but even if it is delayed until the budget process the letter might be a good frame for the debate by appearing.

The letter should make the case that benefits are good for attracting and retaining talent and are common in the business community with little fanfare. The letter should be sent to local media and given lots of publicity.

Press conference to highlight costs thus far to offer the benefits and announce our campaign message.

Timeline: depends on council's timeline, but probably the sooner the better – remember our goal is to shape the debate, so we don't want to wait until the issue surfaces in the fall.

There is a good chance that the allocated $58,000 for the benefits will not even be used this year. Publicizing the true costs will help us remove that "economic excuse". The press conference is all about shaping the debate and trying to expose the prejudice of council.

a) Do you want your group to be featured on one of these radio shows?

b) If so, can you give me the name and contact information for your spokesperson?

ii) CYBER/WEB

Coloradosprings.com, the Pikes Peak regions largest web portal which includes content from the Independent and our website csindy.com, the Gazette and their web site, Channels 5/30 (NBC) and the PPLD! Has graciously agreed to provide:

a) Banners ads promoting the ICF, which will link to b) below

b) A web page outlining the goals and mission of the ICF, which will link to c) below as well as link to the PP Community Funds form for making donations on-line

c) Work with each Indy Fund to develop their own website and teach you how to add and subtract information directly without using html code

In addition, they will work with some ICF groups on a case-by-case basis to promote your work. For example, they might work with All Colorado Springs Reads or the Recycling symposium on developing web sites for their projects.

iii) FREE MEDIA: We will also launch a free media campaign, seeking to promote The Indy Fund and recipient groups via PSAs on print and electronic media.

iv) OTHER

A) CC Class will be working with ICF. Not sure exactly how
B) The Pikes Peak Jazz Festival at the Air Force Academy has chosen the ICF as their non-profit beneficiary. Details forthcoming

Fundraising

1) John O'Donnell and Chris Gorman are coordinating a fundraising breakfast (7:30 Am to 9 AM) for the ICF on Wednesday Nov. 28. We will need 2 or 3 groups to speak.

- Do you want your group to speak for one minute at this event?
- If so, can you give me the name and contact information for your spokesperson?

2) We are still waiting for an answer from El Pomar & Needmore Foundations

3) We are holding a silent auction at our Best of Colorado Springs event on Friday November 9 at the Fine Arts Center. So far, Primativo has donated a dinner for 6 with wine (a $600 value) as well as made a $500 cash donation. If you know of some business interested in donating items that will generate $100 or more, please le t me know.

Fundraising Talking Points

a. First $25,000 raised will be matched by Gay & Lesbian Fund of Colorado and the Colorado Springs Independent

b. No administrative costs. All costs are being taken care of by the Pikes Peak Community Foundation and the Independent. 100% of donations will go to recipient groups.

c. Donations can be made to any or all of the incredibly important 9 selected ICF recipients.

d. This is the ICF's inaugural year. Together we can build this program into a vital and vibrant part of our city's community building efforts.

FINALLY, Enclosed are revised description of your project. Please make suggested changes and either give them to me on October 25 or send them to me by October 26

Mobilize our constituents to write letters to editor, call/write council, and use all means to build a "roar" in support of benefits.
Timeline: ongoing until a vote
We should utilize the new voter id names that we spent money to collect and ad them to those we target with a message and lobbying. We'll need to partner with allied organizations.

Assess the situation for a proactive opportunity to pass an employment nondiscrimination policy for the city.
Timeline: ongoing
We shouldn't be timid to really turn the table on this council by presenting them with employment nondiscrimination. Again, we shape the debate in the same terms as the benefits (fairness, good business). The real bonus is there is zero cost to do this one!

Identify candidates for the district races in 2005.
Timeline: the sooner the better.
Potential progressive candidates need to start attending meetings, following the issues, building name recognition, and participating in our campaign for benefits.

Who's going to do this?
Citizens Project would be willing to be the lead organization for all of the suggested strategies except the candidate recruitment. But while we can offer some staff and infrastructure, we can't do it alone. We will need to build a strong coalition with allied organizations and business leaders. CP has good relations with organizations, but our connection in the business world will need assistance to the more "well connected".